

## **Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration celebrates partnership with US Embassy**

### ***United States Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation awarded to the Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration***

Art lovers on April 30, 2015 gathered at the Makerere Art Gallery to celebrate a partnership the Gallery has with the US Embassy in Uganda. The US Embassy in 2012 started funding the documenting of Art pieces, improving storage space and staff training among other things.

On April 30, 2015 the Ambassador, H.E, Scott DeLisi invited other diplomats in an effort to woe them to start on a journey that he embarked on in 2012; support the preservation of Art.

The cocktail, attracted guests from different diplomat missions including France, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and British Council among others.

Ambassador Scott DeLisi emphasized the need to preserve art and culture so that generations to come can better understand their cultures. He called on others to join him in this noble journey.

### **Our journey;**

In 2012, the United States Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation was announced and as a starving but vigilant institution, we responded to the announcement with a proposal. The Institute of Heritage Conservation and Restoration is still in its infancy having been launched in 2010. Its immediate needs of documenting the collection, training of staff, revamping of storage space and repair of the Institute and gallery building fitted well in the United States Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation funding criteria. We successfully competed for 36,000 dollars (three hundred and sixty thousand dollars only) and spent it in 2013 and 2014 as follows:

- a) We acquired an office space on the Ceramics building next to the Institute building and furnished it. It was also burglar proofed.
- b) The storage space in the Gallery buildings was fitted with modern railings, which now makes it easy to retrieve large and small paintings. A large cupboard that can keep large format prints was also acquired.
- c) Given the large size of the collection, one of the exhibitions in the Gallery space was sectioned off and converted into storage space. Impressive well aerated storage compartments were created.
- d) Four large glasses on the Institute buildings which were shuttered during the 2012 students strike were replaced. Painting of the building was also carried out.
- e) The Institute Administrator received a two weeks training in archiving at the Gallery of Modern Art, Harare Zimbabwe in 2014. After her trip, an expert in archiving was hosted here at the Institute.

The US Ambassador in Kampala was very impressed by the changes his funding had done at the Institute and the transparency we had exhibited in the way we used the funds. He promised and fulfilled his promise of inviting his counterparts from other embassies in Uganda to follow his example by supporting the work of the Institute. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, he organized a cocktail party at the grounds of the Institute where he underscored the relevance and importance of visual culture in the development of any nation.

We prepared over 10 proposals for support and they included the following; publication of collection catalogue and a biannual news letter, construction of movable partition for the gallery, framing of art works, restoration of selected art works, training of staff in restoration, archiving and curatorship, documentation of sculptures in the garden, installation of spotlight system in the gallery and finally and most importat of all, extension of the gallery physical space.

Copies of these proposals were displayed on that event and the ambassadors (or their representatives) who turned up took some home.